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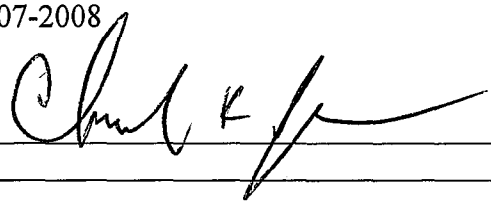
OLD BOOK, NEW LESSONS
Mao, Osama, and the Global Qutbist Insurgency

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Executive Summary

Title: Old Book, New Lessons: Mao, Osama, and the Global Qutbist Insurgency

Author: Major Jan L. Rueschhoff, US Army

Thesis: A close evaluation of today's insurgencies reveals far more similarities to the classical insurgency theory than differences. Just as today's insurgency has evolved from the insurgencies of years past, success in today's counterinsurgency requires a careful evolution of practices—not a revolution of thought.

Discussion: As America and its allies find themselves confronting Al Qaeda across the globe, several modern theorists have suggested Al Qaeda represents a new approach to warfare. Despite these theorists' claims, a long trail of evidence points to a deliberate attempt by Al Qaeda's leadership to model their actions after Mao Tse-tung, Che Guevara, and other classical insurgent leaders of the 20th century. In Al Qaeda's public and internal writings, the fingerprints of classical insurgency theory are clear. Not without its difficulties, Al Qaeda has attempted to educate the Muslim masses and build popular support for their perverse distortion of Islam. With the establishment of a global Caliphate as its political objective, Al Qaeda has used the popular support it has garnered to build a global Qutbist insurgency. The modern theorists argue Al Qaeda's religious orientation, global nature, networked organization, and use of the internet separate it from the insurgencies of the 20th century. Yet, Mao Tse-tung, himself, called for a global spread of communism through the uprising of the population. As already stated, Al Qaeda has a definite political objective despite being religiously based. The acephalous, decentralized nature of Al Qaeda's organization is not unlike what Mao described in his treatise *On Guerrilla War*. Finally, although Al Qaeda and its affiliates use the internet, the limited access in most Muslim countries has seriously reduced the impact of the technology in capturing public support.

Conclusion: The modern insurgency theorists have endeavored to describe something as new, despite it coming from an old book. This paper has demonstrated Al Qaeda's architects have modeled the global Qutbist insurgency directly after the lessons of classical insurgency theorists such as Mao Tse-tung. As such, instead of discounting the lessons learned over the past fifty years, America and its allies can use classical counter-insurgency strategy to achieve victory over Al Qaeda.

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Preface

An old adage says, "If you want to learn something new, read an old book." I started this project with the working thesis that US forces are not applying the lessons learned of the counterinsurgency experiences of the 20th century to our conflict against Al Qaeda and its global insurgency. To my surprise, I found many contemporary authors who insist today's insurgency is a new phenomenon, not to be found in the old books.

While these theorists have written volumes explaining their rationale, their observations did not correlate with my observations as an intelligence officer who has had the charge of analyzing these insurgencies for the past five years. Therefore, I decided it was important to re-examine the nature of Al Qaeda's global insurgency and its relevancy to 20th century insurgencies. This paper is the product of this examination.

I am grateful to many who assisted me in this project. I am deeply indebted to Dr. Chris Jasparro, my faculty advisor, who not only labored through the initial, incoherent drafts of this project, but also provided keen insights and direction. I am thankful for the depth of knowledge of faculty at the Marine Corps University including Dr. Wray Johnson and Dr. Patrice Scanlon who showed great patience as I rambled on about the paper, provided new avenues to explore, and attempted to make this paper something legible. My fellow students at the Command and Staff College deserve credit as well. If you want to get a frank assessment of what someone thinks of your paper, it is always good to have a few Marines around. Most importantly, I must thank my wife and family who endured my focused-attention to this paper for way too many evenings.

OLD BOOK, NEW LESSONS
Mao, Osama, and the Global Qutbist Insurgency

Introduction

"The application of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist revolutionary doctrine is critical to understanding jihadi strategy."—West Point's Combating Terrorism Center[1]

"The insurgent of today, however, is not the Maoist of yesterday."—Martin Muckian[2]

As the United States finds itself once again attempting to come to terms with the issues of counterinsurgency operations, some theorists argue Al Qaeda's global Qutbist* insurgency is vastly different from previous insurgencies—such as Mao Tse-tung's People's War. However, a close evaluation of today's insurgencies reveals far more similarities to the classical insurgency theory than differences. Just as today's insurgency has evolved from the insurgencies of years past, success in today's counterinsurgency requires a careful evolution of practices—not a revolution of thought.

Modern theorists such as Martin Muckian, Steve Metz, and David Kilcullen suggest today's insurgent organizations provide new challenges that invalidate the counterinsurgency lessons of the past fifty years. The State Department's chief counter-terrorism strategist, David Kilcullen, has questioned the relevancy of these lessons to modern conflicts.[3] Steven Metz warns extrapolating these lessons to today's insurgencies is a "recipe for ineffectiveness."[4] Others go further to say applying past lessons to current insurgencies will lead to defeat.[5]

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* "Qutbist" refers to the militant Islamist ideology of Sayyid Qutb who is considered the chief ideological architect of the cultish brand of Islam perpetuated by Usama Bin Laden and Al Qaeda.

The modern theorists misinterpret Al Qaeda's inability to implement their Maoist strategy as a new form of insurgency replete with organizational advantages. Proper examination reveals Al Qaeda's difficulty in following their Maoist strategy provides vulnerabilities. In misinterpreting Al Qaeda's operational design, the modern theorists miss the opportunities afforded to America's allies in confronting Al Qaeda.

Al Qaeda and its related insurgencies in Iraq—far from rejecting classicists such as Mao Tse-tung[†]—are ardent students of classical insurgent theories. With classical insurgency theory in hand, Al Qaeda is attempting to emplace a Maoist-styled Qutbist insurgency across the globe. While technology has changed some tactics for today's insurgents, the basic principles Mao Tse-tung wrote seventy years ago in *On Guerrilla Warfare* are still relevant today. In fact, Al Qaeda appears to be attempting to unify the bands of Qutbist groups in South Asia, Iraq, Afghanistan, and the African Maghreb similarly to Mao's description of forming an insurgent army from bands of "bandits and brigands."[6]

This paper examines Al Qaeda's global Qutbist insurgency, identifies its Maoist roots, reveals the organization's vulnerabilities, dispels calls for a new paradigm of insurgency, and provides recommendations for combating Al Qaeda across the globe.

The Modern Theorists' Arguments

It almost seemed as if the dust at Ground Zero had not settled before the modern theorists began arguing Al Qaeda is a new phenomenon—a revolution of military affairs (RMA). The following are the four major arguments these theorists claim separate Al Qaeda apart from classical insurgency theory:

[†] The author uses "Mao" and the "classicists" in this paper to characterize the classical insurgency theories popularized by Mao Tse-tung and other related insurgency leaders during the 20th century.

1. Al Qaeda represents a global struggle as opposed an insurgency raging in an individual country.

2. Instead of a hierarchical, pyramid structure; today's insurgencies are flat, acephalous organizations.

3. Religious ideologies, not politics, fuel jihadist insurgencies.

4. The internet and modern communications have provided the modern insurgent with an information environment far removed from what classical insurgents could have imagined.

Mao Revisited – A Brief Review of Classical Insurgency Theory

Far from being a new phenomenon, the concept of insurgency has existed since the Old Testament times of Judea.[7] In the 20th Century, Mao's *On Guerrilla War* became the bible of revolutionary warfare and continues to influence current insurgencies. Today, nine of ten insurgencies in the world are Maoist in scope.[8]

Most modern theorists acknowledge that earlier theories have influenced contemporary insurgencies. While Kilcullen still maintains today's insurgencies differ significantly from the classicists, he also points out "an enormous amount of classical counterinsurgency remains relevant." Metz warns against focusing too much a Maoist-inspired approach to counterinsurgency, yet states, "21st-century insurgency is clearly a descendent of a similar phenomenon that blossomed in the 'golden age of insurgency' in the second half of the 20th century."

Since this paper argues Al Qaeda is attempting to follow Mao and his contemporaries—Guevara, Giap, Castro, and others—it is necessary to review the basic principles of classical insurgency.

Mao's People's War

Mao used the Spanish word *guerrilla*—translated as "small war"—to describe his People's War. Guerrilla warfare typically refers to the combat actions of small elements against a stronger, more capable force. Mao's concept adopts these tactics and introduces a political component to the conflict. The insurgent in a People's War must combine their attacks with a concerted effort to win support of the population. Thus, Mao advocated armed conflict along with subversion to overthrow a government force—the Department of Defense definition of insurgency.[9]

Mao presents a three-staged strategy for People's War: Strategic Defense, Strategic Offense, and Strategic Counter-Offense. During the Strategic Defense, the insurgency organizes itself, begins distributing propaganda and conducting civil actions to win popular support, and conducts limited attacks against governmental assets. As the organization gains strength, it moves to the second stage of Strategic Offense. During this stage, the insurgency continues its actions to win popular support while increasing the attacks upon government troops and infrastructure to reduce governmental legitimacy. When the government has been put on the defensive and the insurgency has fully mobilized, the insurgency enters the final stage—Mobile Warfare. No longer using hit-and-run guerrilla tactics, the insurgency conducts conventional military operations to finally overthrow the government and assume control of the country.[10]

Che and the Foco Insurgents

Che Guevara adopted Mao's People's War but made a critical revision. While agreeing popular support is essential for final success, Guevara argued "it is not necessary to wait until all conditions for making revolution exist; the insurrection can create them."[11] In this *foco* insurgency, the insurgent is able to crystallize the population's support through its own actions,

not needing to wait idly under an unjust government. The armed insurgent band is the armed nucleus of the organization, the fighting vanguard of the people.[12]

The Brazilian Carlos Marighella took Mao and Guevara out of the countryside and into the cities in his 1969 book, *Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla*. As the name suggests, Marighella describes in detail the measures necessary to "open rural warfare in the middle of an uncontrollable urban rebellion."[13] Like Guevara, Marighella believed "armed propaganda" could win over popular support. Attacks against government organs are outward expressions of the government's inability and the insurgent's capability. While armed propaganda is important, Marighella also describes using covert printing presses, taped recordings, radio stations, flyers, loudspeakers and graffiti to build popular support.[14]

Common Themes

Despite the differences between Mao and the *focoists* on the manner by which they would garner popular support, the classical insurgency theorists shared common themes in describing how to wage an insurgency.

Political Objective

The first of these themes is the insurgency should have a clearly defined political aim. Building from Clausewitz's work, the classicists recognize that war is an extension of politics and always has a political objective. To achieve this political objective, Mao argues the insurgents must assume political as well as military responsibilities. The insurgency's failure to do so will doom the conflict to failure.[15]

Popular Support

If politics is the interrelationship between people, the second theme for classical insurgency is support of the populace. Although Guevara and Mao disagreed as to how best to establish this support, the population's acceptance and support of the insurgency is essential. Mao wrote, "Because guerrilla warfare basically derives from the masses and is supported by them, it can neither exist nor flourish if it separates itself from their sympathies and co-operation."[16] Guevara echoed this sentiment when he wrote, "The guerrilla fighter needs full help from the people of the area. This is an indispensable condition."[17]

Propaganda and Education

To garner the support of the population, the insurgents must orchestrate a system of propaganda and education. This is the third theme of the classical insurgent theorists. Guevara equated propaganda to a seed used to grow the insurgency. He also best articulated the role education plays in an insurgency when he wrote, "All this is achieved by wide-scale organization of the masses supplemented with patient and careful education."[18]

Organization of the Movement

Even as an insurgency begins to win over the people, the classicists recognize without an effective organizational structure, they cannot give effect to their popular strength.[19] Mao described a tiered organizational structure of districts sub-divided into smaller areas further divided into smaller, local districts. Each of these local districts is organized according to the terrain, the enemy it faces, and the state of the insurgency movement. Within each area or district, Mao advised a committee of political and military cadre who would meet "to unify control, to handle guerrilla troops that come from different sources, and to harmonize military operations and local political."[20]

Despite Mao's description of a hierarchical organizational structure, the organization decentralizes tactical control among the local units. These elements "have more or less complete local control."[21]

Sanctuary

Although Mao does not use the term "sanctuary," he carefully describes the need for bases "in which the guerrillas can carry out their duties of training, self-preservation and development." Recognizing an insurgency may not have a rear-area; Mao advises special care must be taken to choose a strategic location for the establishment of the insurgent's bases.[22] Che Guevara also recognized the importance of preserving "a strong base of operations and to continue strengthening it during the course of the war."[23]

Asymmetric Attacks

Finally, the numerical inferiority of the insurgency mandates an asymmetric character of insurgent attacks to delegitimize the government. Here, Mao's guidance is clear:

> When guerrillas engage a stronger enemy, they withdraw when he advances; harass him when he stops; strike him when he is weary; pursue him when he withdraws. In guerilla strategy, the enemy's rear, flanks, and other vulnerable spots are his vital points, and there he must be harassed, attacked, dispersed, exhausted and annihilated.[24]

Students of Mao

In the last half of the 20th Century, leaders of insurgencies across the globe looked to Mao's writings for guidance. Today, the public and private writings of the global jihadists reveal they too are students of Mao. Some of the most influential Al Qaeda leaders have invoked classical revolutionary leaders to describe their strategy and intent.

Sayyid Qutb, the architect of the militant Islamist ideology adopted by Al Qaeda, built upon Lenin's concepts of revolutionary war. In his seminal work *Milestones*, Qutb borrowed from Lenin—as did Che Guevara[25]—the concept of "vanguards" to seize power in a state.[26]

The use of "vanguards" continues to find its way in further Al Qaeda writings. The Spanish Al Qaeda leader Mustafa Setmariam describes training Arab Afghan "vanguards" gang warfare and other military sciences in Afghanistan.[27] Also known as Abu-Musab al-Suri, Setmariam wrote *Call to Global Islamic Resistance*, a lengthy manifesto outlining an insurgent strategy reminiscent of Mao's teachings.[28]

Abu Ubayd al-Qurashi, an Osama Bin Laden lieutenant and influential jihadist writer[29], posted to an internet site a detailed review of classical insurgency. The article compared and contrasted multiple classical insurgency theorists including Mao, Castro, Giap, and Guevara in an attempt to encourage the "spread of the militarily culture within the ranks of the Islamic movement."[30]

After his death, followers of the former leader of Al Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula, Abu Hajir Abd-al Aziz al-Muqurin, compiled and released his various writings in one volume. In the text, Abu Hajir outlines a decidedly Maoist strategy for the global Qutbist insurgency which details a three-staged strategy in terms of Strategic Defense, Strategic Balance, and Military Decision.[31] A similar Maoist three-phased guerrilla warfare strategy was posted to an Egyptian jihadist website‡.[32]

While the previous examples were for public dissemination, even within Al Qaeda's internal communications we see Mao's lessons at work. In a captured Al Qaeda document describing the group's internal organization, the document's author writes, "A gang warfare theorist once said

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‡ The *Keepers of the Promise* webpage is the creation of Egyptian jihadist Abu-Jihad Muhammad Khalil al-Hakaymah. In August 2006, Abu-Jihad officially joined Al Qaeda.

'The masses are the sea in which the vanguard organization should swim like a fish'."[33] The "gang warfare theorist" the author refers to must be Mao Tse-tung as the author clearly lifted the "fish in the sea" reference from Mao's doctrine.[§]

The substitution of "gang warfare" for Mao's guerrilla warfare makes its appearance in other Al Qaeda statements. Muhammad al-Ruha stated Al Qaeda's strategy in Morocco was to provide Moroccan activists with "intensive training in gang warfare."[34] Jihadist websites have remarked on the Saudi Salafist, Abu-al-Harith's high skills in gang warfare.[35] Even Saddam Hussein's former right-hand man and Al Qaeda affiliate[36], Izzat al Duri, invokes jihad to rally Iraqis to fight the Americans while urging the mujahidin to use "the principles of broad-scale gang warfare."[37]

Al Qaeda and the Global Qutbist Insurgency

With the zeal exhibited by contemporary insurgents in studying Mao and classical insurgency theory, it is difficult to deny the classicist's influence on the global Qutbist insurgency. Through comparing Al Qaeda's intentions with the trends outlined in earlier classical insurgencies, the parallels come sharply into focus: Al Qaeda is using classical insurgency theory to organize a global Qutbist insurgency.

The Political Objective of Al Qaeda

In evaluating Al Qaeda and related Qutbist insurgencies, the religious nature of the organization often overshadows its political goals. Surely, religious ideology is central to Al Qaeda's existence. Koranic scripture accompanies all Al Qaeda proclamations and the

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[§] The actual quote from *On Guerrilla War* is "...of the relationship that should exist between the people and the troops. The former may be likened to water the latter to the fish who inhabit it."

establishment of an Islamic Caliphate is a stated goal; however, as an observer begins to peel back the veneer of the religious rhetoric, Al Qaeda is uncovered as an organization with tenable political goals.

Al Qaeda's objective of establishing an Islamic Caliphate, in itself, speaks as much to a worldly, political end-state as it does to a religious ideology. It is important to remember Muhammad was not only a prophet, but also a head of state. Recovered internal documents reveal Al Qaeda is attempting to achieve this Caliphate through accomplishing four goals[38]:

1. To promote jihad awareness in the Islamic world.

2. To prepare and equip the cadres for the Islamic world through trainings and by participating in actual combat.

3. To support and sponsor the jihad movement as much as possible.

4. To coordinate Jihad movements around the world in an effort to create a unified international Jihad movement.

These goals clearly articulate Al Qaeda's global ambitions. However, if these global goals demonstrate the strategic planning for Al Qaeda, Ayman Zawahiri's 2005 letter to Iraq syndicate leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi demonstrates Al Qaeda's ability to express political objectives at the operational level. Zawahiri lists four distinct, incremental goals for the organization in Iraq.[39]

1. Expel the Americans from Iraq.

2. Establish an Islamic emirate in Iraq. In time, this emirate will grow to achieve the level of Caliphate.

3. Extend the Jihad to Iraq's neighboring countries.

4. Clash with Israel to eliminate resistance in establishing the larger Caliphate.

Far from being a "Cosmic Conflict" where the protagonists engage in a struggle likely never to achieve victory[40], Zarwahiri saw their goals as being well within their grasp. In the same letter, he warns, "things may develop faster than we imagine." If this happens, Zarwahiri

stresses the importance of Zarqawi being able to move to stage two without losing valuable time.[41]

Support of the Population

Al Qaeda's stated strategy mirrors Mao's concern for the people. Osama Bin Laden's second-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, wrote in his 2001 book *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner*, "The jihad movement must come closer to the masses, defend their honor, fend off injustice, and lead them to the path of guidance and victory."[42]

Zawahiri re-emphasized his understanding of the critical need for the public's support in his letter to Al Qaeda Iraq leader, Abu Musab Zarqawi. In this letter, Zawahiri writes, "we will see that the strongest weapon which the mujahedeen enjoy…is popular support from the Muslim masses in Iraq, and the surrounding Muslim countries."[43]

While it is not Bin Laden's strong suit, he has engaged in civil actions such as building highways and schools in Sudan. Once in Afghanistan, Al Qaeda curried favor with the Taliban through financial support.[44] After 9/11, American efforts to freeze Al Qaeda's financial assets have greatly interfered with the organization's ability to provide conduct civil actions.

Propaganda and Education

Just as Mao recognized the need to educate the masses on communist ideology, Al Qaeda has recognized the importance of educating its population on its jihadist ideology. When Zawahiri called for one of its wings to devote itself to issues of the people, a stated task was to share the peoples' concern through "educational work."[45] Al Qaeda addresses this "educational work" through two principle vehicles—madrasas and mosques.

Madrasas

In many countries, madrasas have attempted to fill an education gap their nation's government has not addressed. Some governments have actually encouraged parents to send their sons to madrasas to lessen financial burden of the state.[46] Unfortunately, in many cases the education received in a madrasa is nothing more than rote memorization of the Koran. USAID observed countries with poor education systems normally still outperformed their religious madrasa alternatives.[47] The 9-11 Report suggested Qutbist-oriented madrasas are less concerned with education than becoming "incubators for violent extremism"[48] During her congressional testimony, Jessica Stern described visiting a madrasa whose teachers could not multiply 7 times 8, but taught their students Osama Bin Laden is a hero.[49] Without any counterview to the lessons of Jihad, these young men may fill the ranks of Al Qaeda's military and political cadre across the globe. The effect of extremist-oriented madrasas might have is best illustrated by the fact Afghanistan's Taliban government took its name from the Arabic word for "student"—talib.[50]

Although the Qutbist -oriented madrasa may be rare[51], extremist madrasas are making inroads in several countries.[52] Pakistani officials report 10 to 15 percent of Pakistan's madrasas teach Qutbist jihad.[53] The Saudi government—bowing to international pressure—reviewed the schoolbooks in its country's madrasas in 2002 and reported 15 percent of the material ranged from "questionable" to "horrible."[54] Thai authorities arrested teachers associated with the Qutbist *Barisan Revolusi Nasional-Koordinasi* (BRN-C) after finding bomb-making materials and instructions in the schools.[55]

Mosques

While madrasas fill an important role in inculcating youth in the militant Qutbist ideology, Qutbist-oriented mosques provide Al Qaeda's affiliates with powerful megaphones for education

and recruitment. In the 1980s, even moderate mosques called upon Muslim men to join the Jihad to repeal Russian invaders of Afghanistan. Today, these mosques champion the 9/11, London, and Madrid bombings and become natural centers to recruit young men to the militant Qutbist cause.[56]

One of the most prominent cases of an Al Qaeda-affiliated mosque was the Finsbury Park mosque in London. The mosque's imam, Abu Hamza al-Masri led many men—including Zacarias Moussaoui and Richard Reid—to volunteer for jihad throughout the world. Beyond recruitment, the mosque—as is the case in many others across the world—was also a training center for the more practical skills in jihad. Men learned to strip and reassemble AK-47 assault weapons in the mosque's basement.[57]

Al Qaeda's Attempts to Organize the Bands

After the bombing of the World Trade Center and Pentagon, Zawahiri described Al Qaeda as a coalition made up of the jihad movements across the Muslim world.[58] Indeed, Al Qaeda's regional districts range across the world from the Iberian Peninsula, through Africa, across the Middle East, and into Asia, coinciding with the historical Caliphate and broader pan-Islamic Caliphate Al Qaeda wishes to create (Figure 1).[59] In 85% of the areas where Qutbist insurgencies are present, there is a known presence of Al Qaeda activity.[60]

At the head of Al Qaeda's organization is Osama Bin Laden—described by fellow Qutbist s as the Che Guevara of the Qutbist s[61]—and "Al Qaeda Central." Despite criticism of Al Qaeda being an acephalous, non-hierarchical organization, internal Al Qaeda documents recovered after the American invasion of Afghanistan reveal a very structured headquarters organization with clear lines of authority and detailed job descriptions.[62]
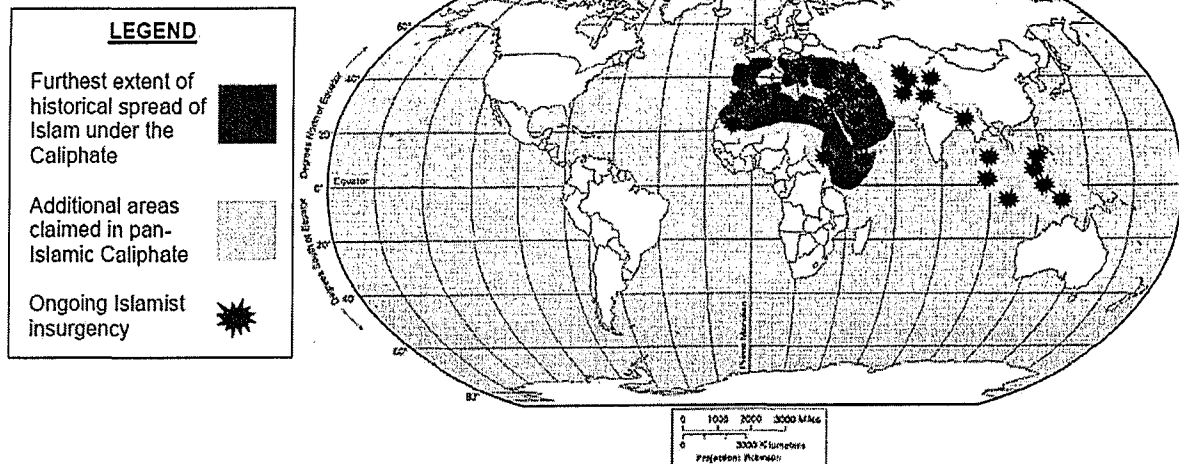
Figure 1 – Islamist Insurgencies and the Caliphate

From this headquarters, Al Qaeda attempts to manage its global operations. As expressed in an internal document, Al Qaeda's policy is to reach out to "truthful Islamic jihadist movements and groups is [sic] to cooperate under the umbrella of faith and belief and we shall always attempt to at uniting and integrating with them."[63] This strategy is similar to Mao's discussion of the seventh form of insurgent organization—bringing together disparate bands of bandits and brigands.[64]

In Al Qaeda's organizational model (Figure 2), regional movements are courted to affiliate
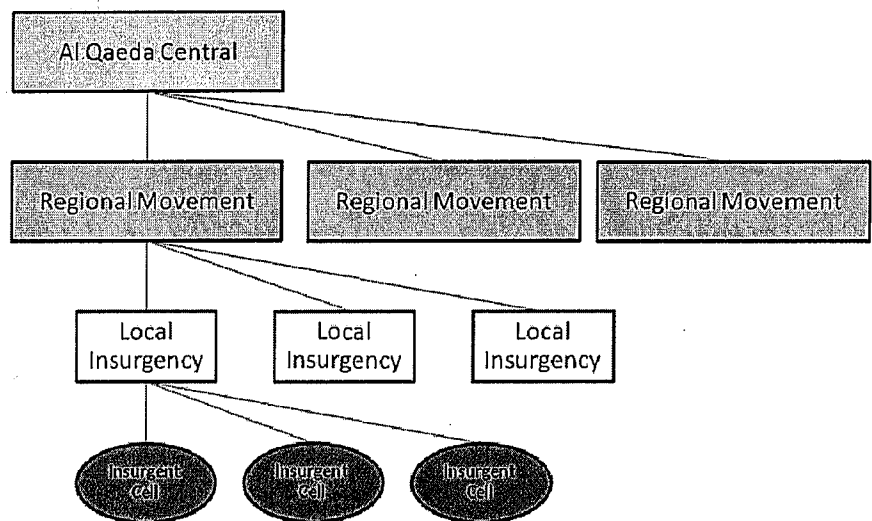
Figure 2 -- Al Qaeda's Organizational Model

within Al Qaeda's larger umbrella. Examples of these regional movements are Al Qaeda in the Maghreb, Al Qaeda in Iraq, and Indonesia's Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). Regional movements

continue this method of organization by recruiting various local insurgency groups, just as the local groups pull together individual cells.

Al Qaeda in Iraq, recently renamed the Islamic State in Iraq, is a perfect example of a regional Al Qaeda organization consolidating smaller local insurgency groups. Upon his arrest in 2004, Zarqawi financier in Iraq Izz al-Din al-Majid's told interrogators his objective, "was to unite the insurgent groups Ansar al-Sunna, Jaysh Muhammad, and the Islamic Resistance Army."[65] Al Qaeda announced the Islamic State in Iraq in October 2006 in an effort to legitimize the insurgency and move towards the emirate Zawahiri had discussed in his letter with Zarqawi.[66] Since that time, it has continued attempting to pull groups in Iraq under its umbrella.

Jessica Stern describes Al Qaeda's organization as acephalous on the global scale and increasingly hierarchical at the local and cell-level.[67] While Stern correctly identifies Al Qaeda is a hybrid organization, the acephalous nature of the Al Qaeda Global Islamic Insurgency is at the tactical, not strategic levels. Wire diagrams of Al Qaeda's social networks reveal this structure.

Anthony Cordesman and Bruce Hoffman express skepticism when it comes to mapping the wiring diagram of local insurgencies. Tony Cordesman says bluntly, "if anybody said they could draw a wiring diagram of these groups they would either be a visionary or a liar."[68] Hoffman says of the local insurgencies in Iraq, "the problem in Iraq is that there appears to be no such static wiring diagram or organizational structure to identify, unravel, and systematically dismantle."[69]

Despite these doubts, there have been efforts to chart local insurgency cells. Among the most noted attempt is Valdis Krebs' mapping of the nineteen members of the 9/11 attacks. Through social network analysis, Krebs discovered a high degree of centrality between each of the 9/11 highjackers as seen in Figure 3.[70]

Figure 3 -- 9/11 Bombers Cell

José Rodríguez revealed this same all-channel organizational structure among the bombers of the Madrid metro station in 2003 (Figure 4).[71] When Rodríguez expanded his wiring diagram to associates of the Madrid bombers (Figure 5), he discovered linkages between individual cells, facilitators, and external leadership.[72]

Figure 4 -- Madrid Bombers Cell

However, both Krebs and Rodríguez had to rely upon incomplete open-source information. The author was able to conduct social network analysis using classified all-source intelligence data of the Iraqi insurgencies from 2003 to 2007. While admittedly simplistic in its form, Figure 6 depicts a generic template of a how local insurgencies and their cells are inter-related.
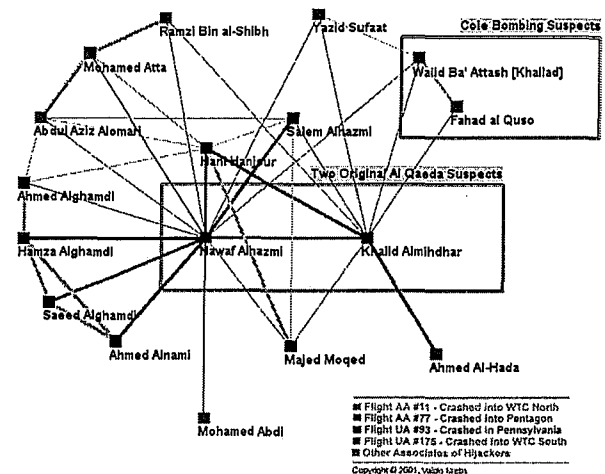

Figure 5 -- Expanded Madrid Network
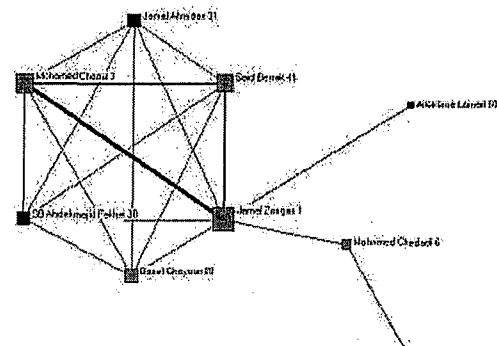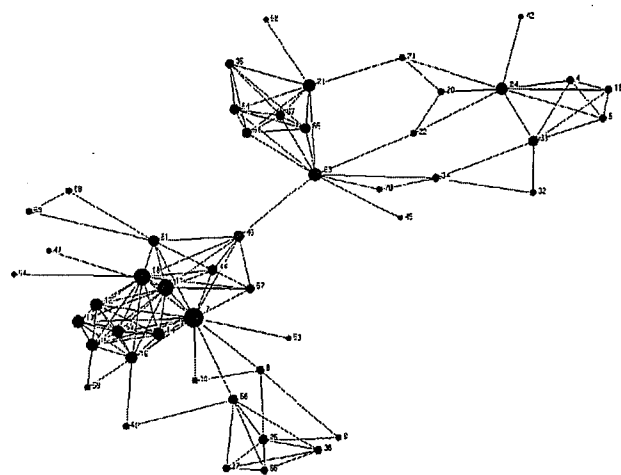
Each local insurgency is configured as an association of one or more cells. Each cell may have five to fifteen core members—closely resembling the military or political cadre in Mao's doctrine. In addition to each cell member knowing the other, there are often connections between members of different cells—even different insurgency groups. Often binding different cells of the same local insurgency is a leader or facilitator. This individual—or small number of individuals—may provide services for the different cells. These services may be recruitment, financing, arms/explosives, or media. Together, the cells and leader/facilitator makes up the local insurgency.

The most essential element of the insurgency—at any level—is the population. In Iraq, many elements of the population may provide services to an insurgent cell based upon economics more than any theology. It is
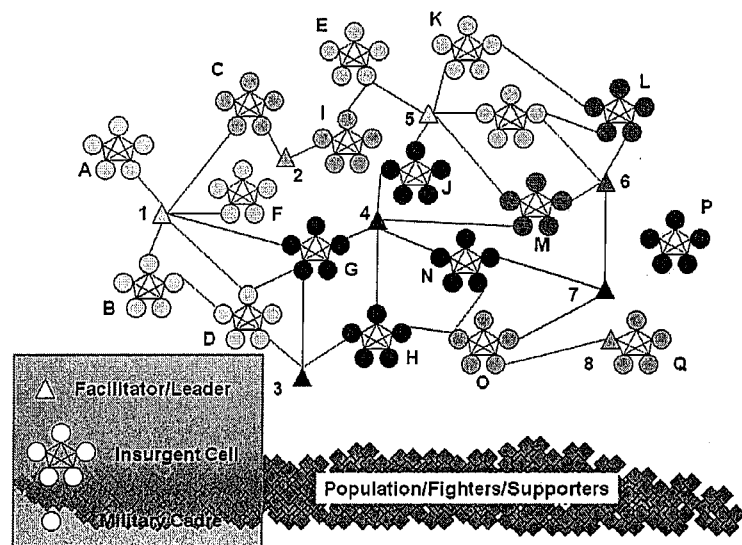
Figure 6 – Doctrinal Template of Local/Cell Insurgency Structure

common for core cell members to hire someone to take part in an attack. An example of this was a man US detained outside of Kirkuk for emplacing an IED. Upon interrogation, he admitted an insurgent cell paid him $9 for his services.[73]

Afghanistan and other Sanctuaries

With the expulsion of the Soviets from Afghanistan and rise of the Taliban, Al Qaeda found itself a much-needed sanctuary to build its operations. Ayman Zawahiri explained, "a jihadist movement needs an arena that would act like an incubator where its seeds would grow and where

it can acquire practical experience in combat, politics, and organizational matters…It is as if 100 years have been added to my life in Afghanistan."[74]

While Afghanistan was Al Qaeda's ideal sanctuary, regional and local Al Qaeda-affiliated insurgencies have found sanctuaries across the globe. Since 1996, the Filipino Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has provided sanctuary for the JI to conduct training and regroup.[75] Until 2006, Al Anbar Province provided sanctuary for Al Qaeda's elements in Iraq. It subsequently declared Baqubah the capital of the Islamic State of Iraq and attempted to re-establish sanctuary.[76] Beyond Iraq, Al-Qaeda and affiliated groups are using parts of North Africa to ``gain sanctuary, recruit, indoctrinate, train, equip, transit and mount operations."[77]

Asymmetric Attacks

The clearest similarity Al Qaeda and modern insurgencies have to the classical theorists is the use of asymmetric attacks. An Afghanistan Al Qaeda describes the effect of these attacks, "[guerrilla warfare] is the most dangerous type of combat that we carry out against [the British]. The mujahidin form small cells, infiltrate the areas under the enemy's control, attack enemy troops and their military vehicles, then skillfully withdraw and vanish."[78] Examples of Al Qaeda syndicates in Chechnya, Afghanistan, Iraq, and multiple other points across the globe give witness to the asymmetric nature of Al Qaeda's operations.

Countering the Modern Theorists

Despite the Al Qaeda strategy's clear lineage to classical insurgency theory and evidence of their efforts to enact this strategy, the modern theorists are convinced Al Qaeda represents a new form of warfare. The rebuttals to their arguments are listed below.

Argument 1 – Globalization of Modern Insurgency

One of the first arguments made by the modern theorists is the global nature of Al Qaeda.[79]

With Al Qaeda operating across national boundaries, David Kilcullen argues, "the classical

single-state paradigm for counter-insurgency may no longer apply."[80]

However, the idea that classical insurgency theory was only about single-state conflicts

ignores a vital factor in 20th century insurgencies—the worldwide spread of communism. The

Communist Manifesto called for a global revolution to overthrow existing social conditions. Mao

echoed these global ambitions when he wrote, "People of the world, be courageous, and dare to

fight, defy difficulties and advance wave upon wave. Then the whole world will belong to the

people."[81]

Al Qaeda's global ambitions do not represent a difference, but a similarity to the realities of

classical insurgency theory. Those who argue classical insurgency only has relevance to single-

state actions fall victim to a myopic view of the world situation in the 20th Century.

Argument 2 – Modern Insurgency's Flat Organizational Structure

Of the factors modern theorists use to differentiate today's insurgents from the classicists,

organizational structure is the most cited. After the events of September 11th and the United

States' lengthening efforts to curb Iraq's insurgencies, some theorists have turned to a concept

called "Netwar" to understand these insurgencies and how the counterinsurgent might best

confront them. Martin Muckian and Bruce Hoffman are the strongest protagonists to move

"Netwar" from theory to a descriptor of modern insurgencies. Bruce Hoffman wrote, "what we

find in Iraq is the closest manifestation yet of 'netwar'...the Iraqi insurgency today appears to

have no clear leader (or leadership), no ambition to seize and actually hold territory (except

ephemerally, as in the recent cases of Fallujah and Najaf), no unifying ideology, and, most important, no identifiable organization."[82]

Muckian's article in *Parameters* states the International Crisis Group described the armed groups in Iraq as "more a loose network of factions involving a common 'trademark' than a fully integrated organization."[83] However, Muckian misrepresented the ICG's report to support his premise. While the ICG quotes "others" who have described Iraq's insurgencies as being a loose network, ICG's own evaluation was Al Qaeda's syndicate in Iraq, "appears to be surprisingly well-structured."[84]

David Kilcullen doubts the amount of control Al Qaeda's leadership actually exerts on its syndicates. While there are links between elements of the global Islamic insurgency, Kilcullen argues Al Qaeda is not a "single unified movement or a hierarchical organization."[85] Others maintain Al Qaeda organizational structure is a great example of *netwar* while still acknowledging that Bin Ladin finances and directs some operations.[86]

As this paper has already demonstrated, Al Qaeda has attempted to bring a hierarchical dimension to the Qutbist insurgencies waging worldwide. While theorists such as Kilcullen argue Al Qaeda's organization holds little command and control over operations at lower levels, this paper has likewise demonstrated Mao expressed the need for decentralized control at local levels. In short, Al Qaeda has striven to replicate the multi-tiered, hierarchical organization Mao outlined in his writings nearly eighty years ago.

Argument 3 – Theology Over Politics

Beyond questions of organizational structure, the modern theorists argue Qutbist insurgencies are a different breed due to their religious inspirations. Kilcullen suggests, "The religious ideology of some modern insurgents creates a different dynamic."[87] Ian Beckett

observed of the Iraqi insurgencies, "...there is not yet the cohesive leadership, political vision, strategic direction, or unifying ideology to suggest the emergence of a real insurgency."[88] Others state modern insurgent strategy does not call upon preliminary political mobilization.[89]

It is undisputed that Al Qaeda champions a religious ideology. Al Qaeda wishes for a world ruled by Shari'ah or religious law. Osama Bin Laden, Zawahiri, Zarqawi, and other Al Qaeda leaders invoke scripture from the Koran and religious verse in all of their writings. Yet, as previously demonstrated, Al Qaeda's goals—while religiously inspired—are just as political as the communist zealots of the 20th century. Its goal is to establish a state that subscribes to a radical ideological bent and then continue to expand the revolution across the globe.

Argument 4 – Modern Insurgency and the Use of the Internet

Several modern theorists point to Al Qaeda's use of the internet to separate the global Qutbist insurgency from classical insurgency theory. Bruce Hoffman testified before congress, "For al-Qa'ida, the Internet therefore has become something of a virtual sanctuary: providing an effective, expeditious and anonymous means through which the movement can continue to communicate with its fighters, followers, sympathizers and supporters world-wide."[90] Kilcullen concluded, "Classical counterinsurgency theory has little to say about such electronic sanctuary."[91]

Netwar theory advocates point to Al Qaeda's use of the internet as an enabler of flatter, non-hierarchical networks.[92] Martin Muckian wrote in *Parameters*, "It is important to understand that this technology is not simply a communication tool; in large part, it is what makes a networked organization possible."[93]

Al Qaeda does take advantage of the internet for communication, training, recruitment, and propaganda purposes. Experts estimate there were nearly 4,600 terrorist websites in 2006.[94] Al Qaeda is no exception. Its internet operations are polished, professional multi-media products used to proselytize its jihadist ideology, boast of its military actions, and recruit future fighters. It has also used the internet to send command and control messages across the globe, sometimes enciphering its messages through images on affiliated websites.[95]

However, the modern theorists have overemphasized how this new technology affects insurgencies across the globe. Despite the shocking expansion of internet usage in the western world, within those countries most susceptible to Qutbist insurgency, internet usage is still astonishingly low. According to the 2007 CIA World Factbook, many

World Ranking	Country	% Internet Usage	Data Date
	World	15.42%	2005
40	Malaysia	45.49%	2006
43	Brunei	44.21%	2006
47	United Arab Emirates	38.46%	2006
60	Kuwait	32.60%	2006
63	Qatar	31.95%	2006
64	Malta	31.65%	2005
68	Israel	29.55%	2006
72	Iran	27.52%	2006
76	Lebanon	24.20%	2006
82	Bahrain	22.20%	2006
95	Morocco	18.07%	2006
96	Turkey	17.26%	2006
98	Saudi Arabia	17.03%	2006
110	Jordan	13.16%	2006
114	Thailand	13.01%	2006
115	Tunisia	12.60%	2006
125	China	10.36%	2006
126	Azerbaijan	10.21%	2006
127	Oman	9.96%	2006
132	Sudan	8.89%	2006
136	Kazakhstan	8.16%	2006
137	Syria	7.77%	2006
138	Kenya	7.50%	2006
139	Egypt	7.47%	2006
141	Algeria	7.38%	2006
142	Pakistan	7.28%	2006
145	Indonesia	6.82%	2005
149	Uzbekistan	6.12%	2006
150	Nigeria	5.92%	2006
152	Kyrgyzstan	5.64%	2006
157	India	5.31%	2005
159	Philippines	5.07%	2005
163	Libya	3.84%	2005
180	Djibouti	2.22%	2006
183	Sri Lanka	2.05%	2006
184	Eritrea	2.04%	2006
188	Afghanistan	1.68%	2006
193	Turkmenistan	1.27%	2006
194	Yemen	1.21%	2006
195	Somalia	1.03%	2006
196	Tanzania	0.98%	2005
204	Mali	0.58%	2006
212	Bangladesh	0.30%	2006
214	Tajikistan	0.28%	2005
216	Ethiopia	0.21%	2005
218	Iraq	0.13%	2004

Table 1 – Internet Usage Rates by Country

countries facing a Qutbist insurgency have internet usage rates less than 10%. (See Figure 7)

When one considers the demographics of internet users in most Muslim countries are likely educated, employed, and more likely to be associated with the government of their country, the internet is less likely to have the mass impact the modern theorists claim it to have. Yes, the internet is a new technology insurgents are using. However, it does not represent a revolution of insurgency theory.

Missing the Mark—Al Qaeda's Failure and Vulnerabilities

From Al Qaeda's ardent scholarship of classical insurgency theory and their stated strategy—both public and internal—Al Qaeda has clearly modeled itself after a Maoist style of insurgency. Yet, its strategy of unifying various Qutbist bands is proving—just as Mao professed[96]—to be difficult. Not only is Al Qaeda not always able to bring local and regional Qutbist movements within their fold, Al Qaeda has found it an arduous task to provide control over the various regional insurgency movements. The best example of Al Qaeda's woes in controlling its syndicates was its efforts to control Abu Musab Zaraqawi's actions in Iraq.

Zarqawi catapulted himself to the top of every American's consciousness with televised beheadings of American hostages. Most disturbing to Zarqawi's global minders was the Zaraqawi's waging of terror against Iraqi Shia. Zarawahiri warned Zaraqawi in his 2005 letter that such attacks against the Shia works against the popular message it must support for its insurgency to be successful.[97] A second letter from another Al Qaeda Central writer, an unidentified "Atiyah", reinforced Zarwahiri's pleas and added Zarqawi should obey the guidance from Al Qaeda Central. Al Qaeda Central's efforts to reign in its Iraq syndicate leader were too little, too late. Responding to Al Qaeda in Iraq's heavy-handed tactics, tribal leaders in Iraq's Al

Anbar province turned their support from Al Qaeda and to the U.S.-led coalition efforts. Al Qaeda's inability to exercise control over its Iraqi syndicate led it to a devastating defeat in the primary theater of the GQI.

In its attempt to unify Qutbist movements across the globe, Al Qaeda struggles to reconcile multiple Qutbist ideologies, strategies, and tactics. American successes since 9/11 in targeting top Al Qaeda leadership has exacerbated the leadership issues already festering within the organization. In response to Bin Laden's perceived failure in leadership, one Qutbist leader argued Al Qaeda should, "stop all foreign actions, stop sending people to captivity, and stop devising new operations."[98]

Reeling from the loss of support in Iraq and bickering amongst its leadership, Al Qaeda is finding it hard to achieve success in waging its Maoist-styled insurgency. Despite a stated strategy of civil actions directed to build public support, in practice Al Qaeda has proven itself challenged at state building.[99] Without actions to provide a political advantage to the Muslim world, Al Qaeda more closely resembles the *focoist* insurgents—concentrating on armed propaganda to win public support.

Implications for Counterinsurgents in the 21st Century

This paper has earlier identified Al Qaeda as attempting to use classical insurgency theory to propagate its global Qutbist insurgency. This insurgency exists at the global, regional, local, and cellular levels. If Al Qaeda is attempting to wage a classical insurgency, it is logical to deduce classical counter-insurgency practices are still valid, despite the warnings of modern insurgency theorists. To meet the scale of Al Qaeda's efforts, America and its allies must meet Al Qaeda

with the following strategy: Disrupt Globally, Contain Regionally, Defeat Locally, and Destroy at the Cellular level.

Disrupt Globally

It is absurd to suggest the West can eliminate Qutbist ideology from the globe. However, American and its allies must continue to hunt senior Al Qaeda leadership, conduct disruption of Al Qaeda media outlets, and continue to interdict financial transactions between Al Qaeda Central and regional Qutbist movements. Al Qaeda has found it difficult to forge a unified global insurgency based upon leadership differences and a relentless manhunt for remaining top-level Al Qaeda leaders. These actions will prevent Al Qaeda from overcoming these difficulties and harnessing the power of a unified Qutbist movement across the globe.

Contain Regionally

Limited military and interagency resources will preclude America from engaging Al Qaeda on every theater at a level to defeat the Qutbist insurgency. However, through working with foreign governments and limited military/civil action operations, the United States and its allies should be able to contain regional Qutbist movements to their current area of operations, limit foreign fighters and resources from reinforcing the theater, and identify strategic terror threats prior to their entry into the United States.

Defeat Locally

In those theaters where America's allies have made a concerted effort to expend military and governmental resources, the aim should be to defeat the local insurgencies within a region. Iraq and Afghanistan are examples of theaters where they can use—and are using—traditional counter-insurgency techniques to defeat Al Qaeda's syndicates. Frank Kitson's basics of

separating the insurgents from the population, creating security by targeting the political and

military cadres, and providing support to the government to grow legitimacy still work.[100]

Destroy at the Cellular Level

The acephalous nature at the cellular level of the insurgency invalidates the ineffective

technique of targeting key nodes of a cell. In an all-channel network cell, attempting to target

one military or political cadre and expecting success leads the counter-insurgent into an endless

game of "whack-a-mole". Rather, while continuing the political, informational, and civil-

military operations mandated by classical counter-insurgency, it is vital to develop a social

network of the cells within the local insurgencies and target each military/political cadre within

the cell as a whole.

Conclusion

The old adage says, "If you want to learn something new, read an old book." The modern

insurgency theorists have endeavored to describe something as new, despite it coming from an

old book. This paper has demonstrated Al Qaeda's global Qutbist insurgency is directly

modeled after the lessons of classical insurgency theorists such as Mao Tse-tung. As such,

instead of discounting the lessons learned over the past fifty years, America and its allies can use

classical counter-insurgency strategy to achieve victory over Al Qaeda. Specifically, America

and its allies can use classical counter-insurgency theory to disrupt Al Qaeda globally, contain it

regionally, defeat it locally, and destroy it at the cellular level.

Far from being invulnerable, Al Qaeda is struggling to maintain its existence. Properly

identifying Al Qaeda for what it is will go a long way to seal peace in a world of conflict.

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Glossary

All-Channel Network

A collaborative network in which everyone is connected to everyone else. (Arquilla)

Al- Qaeda

The foundation, the base; the word can also mean model or principle, as something on should aspire to follow. (Ruthven)

Caliphate

The realm ruled by the Caliph (see Khalifa*), often synonymous in early Islamic times with the* dar al-islam *(sphere of Islam); also reign or the period of time that any given Caliph is ruled.* (Ruthven)

Counterinsurgency

Those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency. (JP 1-02)

Insurgency

An organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict. (JP 1-02)

Insurgent

Member of a political party who rebels against established leadership. (JP 1-02)

Jihad

"Struggle" –a term used for holy war; the "greater jihad" tendencies, while the "lesser jihad" is the physical struggle against one's enemies or the enemies of Islam. (Ruthven)

Khalifa

Caliph, politico-religious leader of the community of Muslims after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, God's vice-regent on Earth. (Ruthven)

Netwar

An emerging mode of conflict (and crime) at societal levels, involving measures short of war, in which the protagonists use--indeed, depend on using--network forms of organization, doctrine, strategy and communication. (Arquilla)

Qutbism

The violent interpretation of Islam based upon the writings of Sayyid Qutb and other Islamic theoreticians (e.g. Abuld Ala Muaduid and Hassan Banna) who provide the intellectual rationale underpinning Islamic-Fascism and Al Qaeda. (Eikmeier)

Social Network Analysis

A tool for understanding the organizational dynamics of an insurgency and how best to attack or exploit it. It allows analysts to identify and portray the details of a network structure. It shows how an insurgency's networked organization behaves and how that connectivity affects its behavior. (FM 3-24)

Subversion

Action designed to undermine the military, economic, psychological, or political strength or morale of a regime. (JP 1-02)

Terrorism

The calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological. (JP 1-02)

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